



NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Dave Helfert (202) 205-6740
Internet Address: www.sba.gov/news/

SBA ADMINISTRATOR AIDA ALVAREZ TO PRESENT AWARD TO IRISH PRESIDENT

WASHINGTON - Administrator Aida Alvarez of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) will present the Tenth Annual Flax Trust Award to the President of Ireland, Mary L. McAleese, in ceremonies the evening of Monday, May 15th, in Washington, DC. President McAleese, her country's Chief Executive since 1997, is being honored for her work toward reunification of the people of Ireland.

The Flax Trust is a charitable organization formed in Belfast in 1977 to reconcile "a divided community through economic and social development, bringing peace to both communities, one person and one job at a time." Flax Trust/America was established in 1982.

"President McAleese has made the quest for peace the cornerstone of her presidency, and reunification of the people of Ireland her life's mission," said Administrator Alvarez. **"President Clinton and this Administration share her strong conviction that national reconciliation can only be built on a foundation of equal opportunity for every citizen."**

Administrator Alvarez was the 1999 Flax Trust Award recipient, in recognition of her efforts to promote entrepreneurial development in Ireland and increase trading partnerships between U.S. and Irish small businesses. Other past Flax Trust Award honorees include President Bill Clinton, Vice President Al Gore, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Tom Foley and U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy.

For more information on all of SBA's programs for small businesses, call the SBA Answer Desk at 1-800 U ASK SBA, or visit the SBA's extensive Web site at www.sba.gov.

National Small Business Week 2000, the agency's signature event for the year, will take place May 23-25 in Washington, D.C.

The SBA, established in 1953, provides financial, technical and management assistance to help Americans start, run, and grow their businesses. With a portfolio of business loans, loan guarantees and disaster loans worth almost \$50 billion, the SBA is the nation's largest single financial backer of small businesses. Last year, the SBA offered management and technical assistance to more than one million small business owners.

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